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COMMENTS ON USMACV FIELD REPORTING

S-2164

General

From the standpoint of the intelligence interests of this branch, the major area of suggested improvement for USMACV field reporting involves not so much the quality of the information reported as the degree to which it lends itself to quantification. In this context, crucial backup material -- such as the firm identification of military units or a definite time frame for a source's observations -- can make the difference between a report that is purely informative and one which can be combined with others in the construction of a quantitative measure of the Communist effort.

The solution of quantitative problems related to the Vietnam War requires three fundamental intelligence variables: (a) a definite time period, (b) a measureable unit of enemy activity, whether this be weight in the case of food or medicine consumption, rounds in the case of ammunition consumption, or number of enemy killed in the case of rate of combat information, and (c) the strength of the unit involved, and whether or not the variables of time and enemy activity apply to the entire unit or only to some portion of it.

Principal among the specific improvements that could be made is the identification of military or quasi-military units within a report. Frequently the use of cover designators or the mention of units not held in the current Order of Battle obscures the true impact of an intelligence report because the analyst cannot determine the size,

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identity, or location of the units involved. The current list of Viet Cong cover designations published by USMACV is not adequate for this purpose, and it is suggested that it either be updated and expanded or that a more thorough identification procedure be adopted by USMACV.

Although the problem of unit identification occurs in all types of field reporting, most of the quantification difficulties arise in the interrogation of prisoners and returnees. The value of these reports would be enhanced significantly if the following improvements could be made:

(a) A standardization of reporting procedure. If a summary paragraph related to each subject heading were to highlight the data of prime significance, useful information would be far less likely to be buried in the mass of data usually contained in interrogation reports. As an example, a section on enemy infiltration might be summarized by giving the inclusive dates during which infiltration took place, the general route taken, and any significant problems encountered by the source or his unit. This type of format would greatly reduce the manpower currently required to process thoroughly the lengthy interrogation reports and insure that all significant information is extracted.

(b) A reduction in the vagueness in time frame surrounding most POW and returnee reports of military or logistics operations. Every attempt should be made to obtain specific information on the number of days involved in training, in an operation, in picking up supplies and food, in battlefield preparation, etc.

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(c) An increase in specific data on time, place, and unit strength where shortages of supplies are reported. The subject of the interrogation should be thoroughly queried as to the extent of the shortage, i.e. was it his squad, his regiment, or the entire province that was short of material. Additionally, were the shortages the same throughout the whole spectrum of the supply system, or were they, for example, short of food but fully equipped with ammunition and uniforms.

(d) An increase in the comments of USMACV as to the credibility of the source and the degree to which the information contained in the report is corroborated by other information on the same unit or by any related data held in Saigon.

Specific Intelligence Areas

A. Order of Battle

Current reporting provides comprehensive information on accepted enemy personnel strength by Corps and province in South Vietnam, including a detailed breakdown of NVA strength, a current estimate of VC forces, and the composition of these forces. It would be useful, however, if information on the accepted strength totals by Corps for VC Main Force and VC Local Force were made available. Currently, there is no distinction made between these two types of units in the weekly Order of Battle, and such information is available only on a quarterly basis from the USMACV Periodic Intelligence Report. These Periodic Intelligence Reports also contain significant information on the

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strengths and composition of combat, combat support, militia, and political cadre in South Vietnam, and the usefulness of the reports would rise if they could be published more frequently.

B. Rate of Combat

In view of the importance of a meaningful rate of combat index to virtually all aspects of intelligence on the Vietnam War, it is suggested that all prisoners and returnees be thoroughly interrogated on this subject. Each should provide a listing of the dates and places where he took part in combat engagements. Additionally, the source should provide the extent of his knowledge as to what percentage of his unit was engaged, inasmuch as his individual rate of engagement as a squad member may not accurately reflect that of his entire battalion.

C. Basic Load and Ammunition Expenditure

Prisoners and returnees are currently being interrogated in order to determine the basic load of various weapons. Statistical comparisons between these basic load quantities and the actual quantities of ammunition held by various units, however, suggest that interrogation subjects are providing information on what is prescribed by VC or PAVN military regulations rather than what the situation actually is. It is suggested that this point be more thoroughly explored in future interrogations in an attempt to establish the actual quantities of ammunition brought into and expended during an engagement.

D. Recruitment

There has been an abundance of field reporting on the subject of VC recruitment, administration, and employment of civilian laborers.

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Unfortunately, this has not been the case with the recruitment of combat trainees. Much more information is required on the subjects of available VC manpower, and the military manpower procurement policy and effectiveness within South Vietnam. Some information on this subject is often contained in interrogation reports, but too often it is so fragmentary as to render it almost useless. It is hoped that as US forces come into increasing contact with VC forces in III and IV Corps areas more information on the subject of military recruitment will become available.

E. Weapons Composition

Current information on the composition of weapons in use by Communist forces in South Vietnam suffers from a lack of correlation between captured documentary records and the positive identification of captured weapons. It is suggested that USMACV explore the possibility of expanding its efforts in this field, and provide at least a sampling of the weapons, by type, that are captured. Information of this sort would be useful not only in the assessment of weapons infiltration and ammunition reloading requirements, but also as an aid in determining the type of force -- i.e. whether guerrilla or main force -- that had been engaged.

The relationship between weapons composition and battlefield policing is a direct one. It is suggested that additional emphasis be placed on these subjects during interrogations and that an attempt be made to determine the extent of battlefield policing as a source of weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment.

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F. Medical Supplies

Information reports bearing the subject title, Captured Viet Cong Medical Material, should be expanded to include the following information.

(a) A gross weight figure for each group of captured supplies. This data is of prime importance in the calculation of logistics requirements and is currently not reported.

(b) An estimate or calculation by the reporting authority giving the percentage of the total medical supplies captured that is represented by the group of supplies selected for detailed analysis.

Enemy Casualties

The need to determine the approximate distribution (PAVN/VC/Irregular Forces) and number of Communist troop losses in the Vietnam War is crucial to a more complete understanding of the Communist capabilities and the projection of future US involvement in South Vietnam. Recognition is given to the fact that precise statistical reporting is impractical with respect to casualties in ground operations. It is suggested, however, that the following efforts might be made by USMACV in the critical area of combat casualties:

(a) Periodic studies to determine the relative accuracy and consistency of ARVN, CIDG, US, and Third Nation body counts or other casualty estimates.

(b) Post-engagement efforts to ascertain the identity of enemy killed, i.e. were they PAVN, VC, guerrillas, conscripted civilians, etc.

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(c) A coordinated effort to integrate the estimative methodologies of Order of Battle studies and casualty studies. This would yield an effective Communist manpower pool, from which casualties could be deducted and infiltrators and recruits could be added.

(d) Further field estimates as to the role of airstrikes in effecting enemy casualties.

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